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Rhisierdyn, a poet contemporary with the last, evinces the respect, in which he held the productions of Merddin, by the following line:—

“ I will preserve, in honoured authority, the memorials of Merddin.”

And, lastly, Sevyn, a bard of the succeeding century, thus commemorates the reputation, in which the Caledonian poet was held in his time.

“ May I possess the faculty of amusing speech,
Copious as the highly gifted effusions of Merddin's imagination.”

It may be fairly presumed from these quotations, and which, if space permitted, might be considerably augmented, that the works of Merddin were formerly much esteemed for their poetical merit, without reference to that mystical character, which has since been imputed to them, in common with the productions of other ancient bards. That many of these venerable remains contain allusions to the obsolete and obscure mysteries of the Druids it would be vain to deny; but it belongs to the writer, who entertains a due respect for our ancient literature, to rescue it from those imputations, which would confound its varied merits in one mass of unintelligible mysticism, and which would have the still more injurious effect of erecting the ideal temple of fable upon the ruins of the fair fabric of history*. And, with a view to this, it must not be forgotten, that Merddin, like his bardic contemporaries, lays claim to the character of an historian as well as to that of a poet.

ETYMOLOGY.

THE WORD “ANT” AND ITS SYNONYMES.

To the EDITOR of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

IN my wandering, which you, Sir, were so indulgent as to ad-

* It was intended to close this imperfect notice of Merddin with an examination of the opinions here alluded to, and which are entitled to respect from the degree of learning and ability, with which they have been enforced. However, want of room has made it necessary to postpone this design until some future occasion, when, perhaps, it may be deemed advisable to enter into a regular investigation of the mystical and mythological character, ascribed to our ancient poems.

mit an account of into the CAMBRO-BRITON for this month, an ant hill attracted my attention, the perpetual motion of which produced also an emotion in me, so as to cause an extension of my progress ; and the result is now offered to your editorial inspection, under a presumption that it may appear as an appropriate continuation of my erratic journal.

On the names of the ANT.

This little insect has been, proverbially, exhibited to shame the sluggard, as being a pattern of industry, or, to illustrate my present purpose, what may be abstractedly termed motion : and it is a curious coincidence, that the several appellations given to it in the Welsh, and perhaps in most languages, are words significant of such a moving principle. The terms *ant*, *pismire*, *ant emmet*, in a language so formed as the English is, present to the mind no abstract meaning whatever ; therefore they may fairly be claimed as Welsh words, should they be demonstrated as appropriately bearing a descriptive sense in that language ; and more especially so, when it can be proved, notwithstanding the contrary *dictum*, pronounced, under a total ignorance of that language, by a Johnson and a Tooke, that about one half of what may be considered the original stock of English words are derived from it *.

ANT.—This is to be identified with the Welsh ANT, *they go, they will go*, the root of which is A, *going*, or *present motion* ; as, A EI DI? *going wilt thou go?* A ANT HWY? *going will they go?* AV PAN ANT, *I will go when they go.* Than this elementary word, taken as a noun, there cannot be a more fit name for the emmet †.

* There is, no doubt, much truth in this observation : and it is, consequently, certain, that Johnson's Dictionary, however great and well-merited its celebrity, would have been rendered still more valuable, had its learned author possessed even a moderate knowledge of the Welsh tongue. For it is truly extraordinary, into what extravagancies he, in common with other lexicographers, has fallen from his ignorance on this point. The same remark applies also to the erudite works of Voësius, Spelman, Junius, and all other etymological writers, who, in their blind and exclusive attachment to certain languages, seem to have forgotten, that such a one as the Cimbric, at one time the language of Europe, ever had an existence. An etymological work, upon the plan suggested in the last Number (p. 238), under the title of a "Cimbric Lexicon," is a great *desideratum* in the philological literature of Europe.—ED.

† Junius derives "ant" from the Saxon *æmett*, first contracted to *ænt*, and

EMMET.—We may boldly challenge this as being the Welsh word **YMMOD**, motion, which, prior to the introduction of the y into our alphabet, was written *emmod*; and it therefore requires no farther explanation.

PISMIRE.—This is a compound word, from the Welsh *peues*, earth, and *myr*, motions, or ants, and exactly corresponding with *morgnug*, a tump of motion, or ant hill, which is our common aggregate plural for ants*.

FORMICA.—Etymology has assigned the Greek $\mu\eta\mu\eta\zeta$ as the original of this name: but, by the strict rules of literal mutation; the soft sound of m ought to be v, and not f; nevertheless, irregular changes of this kind are common in the Latin. The poverty of several modern languages is seen in the adoption of this term, for want of an original one †.

afterwards to *ant*. The Dutch name is *ahnt*, and the German *amiese*, both of them, apparently, from the same root, whatever it be. Without subscribing implicitly to that above suggested by Geirion, its ingenuity may be admitted; and it cannot fail to be observed, how well it agrees with the proverbial activity of this industrious insect. Yet, if “aut” be really a contraction of *emmett*, Geirion’s hypothesis must fail as far as that word is concerned, however correct it may be with respect to the subsequent names. And there seems much probability in the conjecture respecting “emmet,” of the etymology of which word English writers give no satisfactory account, any farther than that it is of Saxon origin.—ED.

* The Dutch term is *pismiere*, from which, perhaps, the English name has its immediate derivation.—ED.

† The word *formica* furnishes a singular illustration of the wild theories, in which etymologists too often indulge. Servius tells us very gravely, that this insect was so called, “*quod ferat nicas furris*,” and he quotes, as a proof, the following passage from the *Aeneid* of Virgil:—

Ac veluti ingeuentem *formicæ furris acervum*
Cùm populant.

Vossius, in his Etymological Dictionary, cites this vagary, and appears to assent to it; while he doubts the presumed; and only probable, derivation from the Greek $\mu\eta\mu\eta\zeta$, because, forsooth, the Latin word, in its commencement and termination, assumes a form somewhat different, as if numberless instances of similar changes were not to be found. The etymology of Servius, above cited, brings to mind one of the same nature, which occurs in the work of a profound German doctor on the nature of dead bodies, published in 1709; wherein the erudite author derives the word *cadaver* from the three Latin words *caro data termibus*, of which, he says, *cadaver*, by retaining the first syllables only, is an abridgment. Servius’s etymology of *formica* is not more probable, and is much less ingenious.—ED.

The root of $\mu\nu\gamma\mu\eta\xi$ may most probably be $\mu\nu\gamma$, which, by good authority, is said to be an old name for the sea in the Greek, as it still is in the Welsh, *myr* being the aggregate plural of *mor*; and the reason of its being applied to the sea will appear most applicable, by identifying it with the Welsh appellative. In the Greek, too, $\mu\nu\gamma\mu\eta\xi$ was dialectically turned to $\beta\nu\gamma\mu\eta\xi$, by which change was probably expressed the soft sound of *m*, the *v* not being a sound in that language; as in Welsh we say *tros y mor*, over the sea, *tros vor*, over sea, or over a sea*.

The primitive word, from which are derived the most general Welsh names for the *ANT*, is **MOR**, abstractedly implying *motion*; and it is the common appellative for the sea, and, in its plural form, for *ants*, and, sometimes also, for time: and it is so used, because motion is the distinguishing characteristic of those things. By inflection of the vowel *mor* becomes *myr*, which is an aggregate plural: and it is in the plural form that the Welsh names for the ant is generally used, with the exception of *dyban*, *dybanan* †, and *crugiad*. To denote a single ant, the terminations *yn*, *en*, and *an* are affixed to such plurals, and by which are respectively expressed the genders of masculine, feminine, and neuter; and the plural names, which may be so modified, are the following:—

Morion, myrion, morgrug, bywion, mywion.

They form the singular, as before mentioned, thus:—

Morionyn Myrionyn Morgrugyn Bywionyn Mywionyn.
Morionen Myrionen Morgrugen Bywionen Mywionen.
Morionan Myrionan Morgrugan Bywionan Mywionan.

* The Greek lexicons derive $\mu\nu\gamma\mu\eta\xi$ only from $\mu\nu\gamma\mu\omega$;—a word, according to Hesychius, of the same signification,—without giving us the root of the two names, which appears to be here happily supplied by Geirion. And it cannot be questioned, that many of the primitive roots, still retained in Welsh, and of which *mor* is an example, once existed in the Greek also, but were gradually lost in the progressive refinements, which that polished tongue underwent. $\mu\nu\gamma\mu\eta\xi$, which is the *Aeolic* dialect, was varied, by the Doric, into $\mu\nu\mu\alpha\xi$, as we find it used by Theocritus in his 9th Idyl: and it is sometimes written $\beta\nu\gamma\mu\alpha\xi$, which affords one instance, among many, of the initial mutations still common to the Welsh language.—ED.

† *Dybanan*, a derivative of *dyban*, an ant, signifies a mechanic or artist, and agrees well with the peculiar qualities of the insect under consideration, than whose instinctive ingenuity there is nothing in the whole range of natural history more truly wonderful. The instances, related of it in Huber's admirable treatise, almost exceed belief.—ED.

Thus, Mr. Editor, you have, here exhibited, upwards of twenty names and variations of names, all characteristic of that little emblem of activity, the ant, not only as an instance of the copiousness of the Welsh, but also as preserving the parent words illustrative of its appellations in other languages both ancient and modern.

Jan. 8th, 1821.

GEIRION.

WELSH MUSIC.—No. X.

To the Editor of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

SIR,—I shall now notice the remainder of the airs contained in the old book, which I named in my last.

“ Farewell Abel Solomon” and “ Moses Solomon.”—The names of these airs bear nothing analogous to Wales; yet the melodies are truly Welsh, particularly the first, which is a most elegant and beautiful composition, commencing in the *minor* key of A, then changing (like *Morfa Rhuddlan*) to the relative *major* and finishing in the *minor*. This tune is particularly well adapted to mournful songs. “ Moses Solomon” is an energetic air, but too extended in its compass for any voice; yet the Pennillion-singers would contrive to follow the harp, sustaining notes, and chaunting on the 5th of the key, while the harper pursued, *ad libitum*, his varied path.

“ Burstoy.”—Here I am again at a loss for a definition of the name of this tune; most likely it belonged, originally, to some house. The air is in 3-4 time, and in the style of *Lwyn Onn*, but by no means so agreeable, nor so well calculated for singing.

“ Triban,” or *the Triplet*.—It is rather a paradox to call a tune, written in common time, or four crotchets in a bar,—a Triplet;—but so it is here. The character of this air is majestic—and not tripping—something in the style of “ Sweet Richard.”

“ Sawdl y Fuwch.”—*The Cow’s Heel*.—Jones gives this tune quite differently in his collection; in fact, there is scarcely any similarity between them, and the only way I can account for it is, that the cows were of a different breed! I give the preference, however, to Mr. Jones’s edition.

* See No. 16 of the CAMBRO-BRITON, p. 170, for Mr. Parry’s description of this air.—ED.